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Earth, the Global Trashcan

 The United States produces 40% of the world’s trash even though we only have 5% of the population (“Fast Facts”). For many years we have been dumping our trash in landfills and the ocean, but now we are running out of space. In addition to this we are carelessly using our natural resources which can be easily conserved through recycling. The average person in Alabama is producing 9.9 pounds of trash per day compared to the nation’s average of 4.4 pounds per day (“Fast Facts”). Recycling is the key to conserving our natural resources and saving our environment.

 The average person in the United States produces an enormous amount of 1,609 pounds of trash a year (“Recycling Statistics and Facts”). One of the main trash products that can be easily recycled is paper. However, one hundred acres of trees are being cut down per minute. This destroys many animals’ habitats and causes them to migrate to a smaller area. However, when one ton of paper is recycled we save seventeen trees, 275 pounds of sulfur, 350 pounds of limestone, 9,000 pounds of steam, 60,000 gallons of water, 225 kilowatt hours and four cubic yards of landfill space (“Recycling Statistics and Facts”). Every hour 250,000 plastic bottles are being dumped into the overflowing landfills. One plastic water bottle will take on average 700 years to decompose. Since we are filling landfills faster than the trash is decomposing, we will quickly run out of space. In addition there are practically floating islands of plastic trash that the sun has melted together floating in our oceans. Some of these “islands” are so big they can be seen from space. These “islands” kill an estimated one million sea creatures every year. Even though we have these floating islands plastic happens to be one of the easiest things to recycle. Just one recycled bottle saves enough energy to power a light bulb for six hours (“Recycling Statistics and Facts”). Now imagine if everyone recycled their plastic bottles; it would save enormous amounts of energy. However, there are other materials to recycle than plastic that would have a major impact on the environment. For example, The Hershey Chocolate Company produces twenty million Hershey kisses a day. The wrappers for these kisses use 133 square miles of aluminum. If this aluminum was recycled the company could reuse it in less than sixty days rather than mining for new aluminum which is dangerous, takes more time and causes major soil erosion. Also recycling aluminum causes 97% less air and water pollution (“Recycling Statistics and Facts”). Aluminum, plastic and paper are not the only things you can recycle. Recycling electronic devices can be extremely energy efficient. One million recycled laptops can power 3,657 homes for one year (“Fast Facts”). Also in 2007, 1.43 million cell phones were retired, but only 10% of them were recycled. If all of the retired cell phones would have been recycled then it would have saved enough energy to power 18,500 homes for a year. (“Recycling Statistics and Facts”) Throwing these products into a recycling bin will save our resources, forests, energy, land fill space and therefore our environment.

Recycling is easy and practical. It consists of categorizing trash into plastic, metal and paper and then taking it to the nearest recycling drop off. In Mobile alone there are over fifteen different places to take recycling material. The amount of trash the human population is producing is overwhelming. Roughly one third of trash is being recycled which is better than previous years but still needs to be improved (“Negative Effects”). Recycling is an effective way to reduce the trash produced and help save our environment and conserve our precious natural resources.

Works Cited

"Fast Facts About Recycling." *AEC Online*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2012.

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